

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9323

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

USMISSION BERLIN UNN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 15374

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, UR

SUBJ: THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE: KIRILENKO BOOSTED, OTHER
HINTS OF COMING CHANGES AT THE TOP

REF: MOSCOW 4245

1. SUMMARY - A LENGTHY, UNSIGNED ARTICLE IN PRAVDA SEPT 29,
WHICH REVIEWS A RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOK OF KIRILENKO'S SPEECHES
AND ARTICLES, SEEMS TO IMPLY THAT KIRILENKO IS SLATED EVENTUALLY TO
REPLACE BREZHNEV AS FUNTIONAL HEAD OF THE CPSU. THE ARTICLE LAUDS
BREZHNEV, BUT ITS EMPHASIS IS ON KIRILENKO, WHO IS PORTRAYED AS AN
ALL-AROUND POLITICAL LEADER IN DOMESTIC AS WELL AS FOREIGN POLICY.
THIS UNUSUAL ARTILE, TAKEN TOGETHER WITH OTHER RECENT INDICATORS --
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INCLUDING A NEW WAVE OF LEADERSHIP RUMORS, THE UNVEILING OF A BUST

OF PODGORNYY, THE SCHEDULING OF A TRADE UNION CONGRESS, AND THE MYSTERIOUS PROMOTIONS OF ANDROPOV AND SCHELOKOV -- INDICATES THAT PRE-SUCCESSION MANEUVERING MAY BE TAKING PLACE, AND THAT THE CONTOURS OF POLITICAL SUCCESSION MAY BEGIN TO EMERGE AT THE NEXT CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM. END SUMMARY.

2. IN WHAT CLEARLY SEEMS TO BE A GROOMING OPERATION, PRAVDA SEPT 29 CARRIES AT THE BOTTOM OF PAGES 2 AND 3 A LENGTHY, UNSIGNED ARTICLE OSTENSIBLY REVIEWING THE RECENTLY PUBLISHED VOLUME OF KIRILENKO'S ARTICLES AND SPEECHES (REFTEL). THE EFFECT OF THE ARTICLE (WE ASSUME FBIS WILL CARRY THE FULL TEXT) IS TO DEPICT KIRILENKO AS A WISE, EXPERIENCED LEADER IN ALL MAJOR POLICY AREAS: DEFENSE, BUILDING COMMUNISM, INTERNAL PARTY AFFAIRS, ECONOMICS, AND FOREIGN POLICY.

3. BREZHNEV IS APPROPRIATELY LAUDED AS AN "OUTSTANDING POLITICAL FIGURE OF THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD, AN INDEFATIGABLE FIGHTER FOR PEACE AND FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR MANKIND", BUT THE FOCUS IS SQUARELY ON KIRILENKO. WHILE DIRECT, PERSONAL PRAISE IS RESERVED ONLY FOR BREZHNEV, KIRILENKO'S SPEECHES AND ARTICLES ARE CHARACTERIZED AS THOROUGH, CLEAR, AND REFLECTING THE PARTY'S "DEEP FAITH IN THE CREATIVE FORCES" OF THE SOVIET PEOPLE.

4. THE FOLLOWING SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF THE ARTICLE STIRKE US AS NOTEWORTHY:

-- THE EMPHASIS IS ON CONTINUITY AND COLLECTIVITY: POLICY IS OUTLINED IN GENERALLY STANDARD TERMS; BREZHNEV IS MENTIONED ONLY THREE TIMES, WHILE THE CPSU AND ITS 25TH CONGRESS ARE REPEATEDLY CITED AS THE SOURCE OF POLICY, AND ATTENTION IS CALLED TO INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY IN WHICH THE "COLLEGIAL, LEADING ORGANS" WORK NORMALLY AND THERE IS "FREE EXPRESSION OF OPINIONS";

--ALTHOUGH THE SUBSTANCE OF THE ARTICLE BREAKS NO NEW GROUND, OVERALL IT SEEMS SOMEWHAT SHADED TOWARD THE CONSERVATIVE SIDE, AS IF TO ASSURE HARDLINERS THAT KIRILENKO IS MINDFUL OF THEIR CONCERNS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE ARTICLE'S FIRST SUBSTANTIVE SECTION FOCUSES ON "DEFENDING THE ATTAINMENTS OF THE REVOLUTION"; THE SECTION ON DOMESTIC POLICY PRAISES "SOCIALIST COMPETITION" AND SAYS NOTHING ABOUT ECONOMIC RE-

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FORM; THE FOREIGN POLICY SECTION GIVES DUE EMPHASIS TO "RELAXATION OF TENSIONS" AS WELL AS TO "CLASS STRUGGLE" AND SUPPORT FOR "REVOLUTIONARY AND LIBERATION MOVEMENTS", BUT MORE SPACE TO LATTER;

-- REGARDING KIRILENKO'S QUALIFICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP, THE ARTICLE LAYS PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON HIS FOREIGN EXPERIENCE, NOTING, FOR INSTANCE, THAT HE HAS HEADED DELEGATIONS TO MANY COUNTRIES; ON THE OTHER HAND, THE PIECE SAYS VIRTUALLY

NOTHING ABOUT MARXIST-LENINIST THEORY AND AGRICULTURAL POLICY;
THE IMPLICATIONS, IF ANY, IS THAT THESE PARTICULAR FIELDS
WOULD BE PRIMARILY THE COMPETENCE OF OTHERS IN THE SENIOR
LEADERSHIP (I.E., SUSLOV AND KULAKOV, RESPECTIVELY).

5. THIS ARTICLE APPEARS AT A TIME WHEN SEVERAL POLITICAL
STRAWS ARE IN THE WIND. AFTER A PERIOD OF RELATIVE QUIET,
LEADERSHIP, RUMORS ARE AGAIN BEGINNING TO CIRCULATE. WE HAVE HEARD
THAT "THIRD WORLD COMMUNISTS" ARE PREDICTING THAT:

-- BREZHNEV WILL BE ELEVATED TO A NEW, "TITO-LIKE"
POSITION WHICH WILL REMOVE HIM FROM MUCH OF HIS PRESENT WORK-
LOAD;

-- SOLOMENTSEV IS IN LINE TO SUCCEED KOSYGIN (WHICH SEEMS
VERY UNLIKELY, SINCE SOLOMENTSEV IS AT PRESENT ONLY A
CANDIDATE POLITBURO MEMBER);

-- BOTH PEL'SHE AND KULAKIV WILL BE REMOVED FROM THE
POLITBURO (WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF THE FORMER WERE
OUSTED ON GROUNDS OF AGE; WE HAVE SEEN NO INDICATION THAT THE
LATTER IS IN TROUBLE -- TO THE CONTRARY, HE WAS CLEARLY BOOSTED
BY REPRESENTING THE CPSU AT CP CONGRESSES IN SOFIA AND ULAN BATOR).
WE HAVE ALSO PICKED UP TWO ADDITIONAL RUMORS CONCERNING KOSYGIN:

-- CHAIRMAN OF THE STATE COMMITTEE FOR SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY KIRILLIN REPORTEDLY TOLD THE DUTCH THAT KOSYGIN WILL
GIVE THE REPORT ON THE 10TH FIVE YEAR PLAN AT THE OCTOBER
SUPREME SOVIET MEETING; AND

-- A ROMANIAN DIPLOMAT HAS TOLD US THAT THE RIGHT SIDE
OF KOSYGIN'S BODY IS PARTIALLY PARALYZED FROM HIS SEIZURE IN
EARLY SEPTEMBER.

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AMEMBASSY SOFIA
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6. THERE HAVE BEEN OTHER SIGNS IN THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS THAT SOMETHING MAY BE BREWING ON THE LEADERSHIP FRONT. THESE INCLUDE:

-- A SEPT 25 TASS ANNOUNCEMENT THAT A BUST OF "TWO-TIME HEARO OF SOCIALIST LABOR" PODGORNYY WAS UNVEILED THAT DAY IN PODGORNYY'S HOME TOWN OF POLTAVA (THIS SEEMS CURIOUS, SINCE AMONG THE CURRENT LEADERSHIP ONLY BREZHNEV HAS BEEN SIMILARLY HONORED, EVEN THOUGH KOSYGIN AND SUSLOV ALSO HAVE TWO "HERO" AWARDS AND THUS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR BUSTS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE HOME TOWNS; ONE POSSIBLE EXPLANATION WOULD BE THAT, AS EARLIER RUMORED, PODGORNYY IS SLATED TO BE RETIRED WITH HONOR FROM HIS POSITION AS SOVIET "PRESIDENT";

-- A SEPTEMBER 22 TRADE UNION COUNCIL PLENUM, WHICH ANNOUNCED THAT A TU CONGRESS WOULD BE HELD NEXT MARCH AND WOULD AMONG CONFIDENTIAL

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OTHER THINGS ELECT A NEW COUNCIL (SUGGESTING THAT A SUCCESSOR TO SHELEPIN MAY SOON EMERGE, CONCEIVABLY WITHIN THE CENTRAL PARTY LEADERSHIP);

-- SUSLOV'S SOMEWHAT UNUSUAL TRIP TO LENINGRAD TO PRESENT A FACTORY AWARD (WHICH INVOLVED CENTRAL MEDIA COVERAGE FOR ROMANOV AS WELL AS FOR SUSLOV); AND

-- THE RATHER MYSTERIOUS PROMOTIONS TO GENERAL OF THE ARMY OF ANDROPOV AND SHCHELOKOV.

7. IN ADDITION, SEVERAL NEWLY PROMOTED LEADERS HAVE RECENTLY RECEIVED SMALL BOOSTS: CC SECRETARY CHERNENKO WAS SELECTED TO HEAD A CC DELEGATION TO THE DANISH CP MEETING; AZERBAIJAN FIRST SECRETARY AND CANDIDATE POLITBURO MEMBER ALIYEV WAS SELECTED TO HEAD A SUPREME SOVIET DELEGATION TO YUGOSLAVIA, IN HIS LITTLE-PUBLICIZED ROLE AS DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE SS PRESIDUM; AND PORTIONS OF A ROUTINE SPEECH BY CC SECRETARY ZIMYANIN SEPT 21 WERE REPLAYED, WITH VOICE, ON THE EVENING TV NEWS. CERTAINLY EXPLANATIONS UNRELATED TO LEADERSHIP MANEUVERING CAN BE FOUND FOR EACH OF THESE TIDBITS. BUT THE OVERALL IMPRESSION IS ONE OF CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL

ACTIVITY, SOME OF WHICH (I.E., THE PODGORNYY BUST AND THE ANDROPOV AND SHCHELOKOV PROMOTIONS) IS NOT READILY EXPLICABLE IN TERMS OF "BUSINESS AS USUAL". THIS IMPRESSION IS STRENGTHENED BY THE UNUSUAL SEPT 29 ARTICLE ON KIRILENKO.

8. EVEN IF IT DOES NOT ADDRESS THE QUESTION OF POLITICAL SUCCESSION DIRECTLY, THE NEXT CC PLENUM FACES A NUMBER OF UNRESOLVED CADRE QUESTIONS. THESE INCLUDE A POSSIBLE PARTY POSITION FOR TIKHONOV, COMENSURATE WITH HIS NEW STATUS AS FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS; A POSSIBLE REPLACEMENT FOR USTINOV IN THE CC SECRETARIAT HANDLING MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL MATTERS (ASSUMING USTINOV WILL BE FORMALLY DROPPED FROM THAT BODY); THE POSITIONING OF A SUCCESSOR TO SHELEPIN AS TU CHIEF; AND THE POSSIBLE REMOVAL FROM THE PARTY LEADERSHIP OF PEL'SHE (ON GROUNDS OF AGE) AND PERHAPS DEMICHEV (LONG RUMORED TO BE ON THE WAY OUT).

9. IF, AS WE SUSPECT, THE ARTICLE ON KIRILENKO IS RELATED TO POLITICAL MANEUVERING IT COULD EVENTUALLY PROVE TO MARK AN EARLY STAGE IN A PROCESS WHICH WOULD POSITION KIRILENKO TO REPLACE CONFIDENTIAL

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BREZHNEV, POSSIBLY WITH KULAKOV -- THE ONLY OTHER POLITBURO MEMBER BESIDES SUSLOV (AND PERHAPS USTINOV) TO HOLD A CC SECRETARY POSITION -- AS NUMBER TWO IN THE PARTY, AND WITH ANDROPOV AND CONCEIVABLY ROMANOV AND SHEHERBITSKIY AS DARK HORSE FOR THE NUMBER TWO POSITION.

10. IF WE ARE INDEED WITNESSING THE EARLY STAGES OF A "SUCCESSION PROCESS", IT SEEMS SAFE TO SAY THAT IT WOULD BE OUT OF KEEPING WITH THE CAUTIOUS AND DELIBERATE IMAGE OF THE BREZHNEV REGIME FOR THAT PROCESS TO UNFOLD AT ONE CC PLENUM. WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED TO SEE THE PROCESS DEVELOP OVER A NUMBER OF MONTHS OR EVEN SEVERAL YEARS. THERE ARE, HOWEVER, STILL SEVERAL POSSIBLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEADERSHIP CHANGES IN 1976 -- NAMELY, A CC PLENUM PRIOR TO THE OCT 27 SS SESSION; A CONCEIVABLE SECOND CC PLENUM IN LATE NOVEMBER OR EARLY DECEMBER; AND OF COURSE BREZHNEV'S 70TH BIRTHDAY IN MID-DECEMBER. IN ANY CASE, THE FALL OF 1976 MAY BE AN EVENTFUL SEASON FOR KREMLIN-WATCHERS.
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